Record Year for Maritime Museum of the Atlantic

Department of Education and Culture (to July 99)
October 28, 1998 10:18

They came by the busloads, carloads and boatloads to the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic in Halifax this summer. More than 230,000 visitors came through the museum's doors from January to October 1998.

With projected visits of a quarter of a million visitors by late December, this year will be the busiest in the museum's 16-year history.

"We've experienced a phenomenal 140 per cent increase in visitation over last year," said Michael Murray, acting director at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic. "A lot of this can be attributed to the state of the Canadian dollar, aggressive marketing by the province and, undoubtedly, the huge stir created by the movie Titanic."

To meet visitor demand, the exhibit was expanded under the Voyages Remembered initiative, a partnership of Nova Scotia Economic Development and Tourism, Halifax Regional Municipality and the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, a part of the Nova Scotia Museum. Titanic: The Unsinkable Ship and Halifax officially opened in June.

"I think a major part of the museum's appeal to visitors is that we are always changing, always doing something different," said Mr. Murray. "What you saw when you walked through the doors a couple of months ago isn't necessarily what you will find here now. Take the Titanic exhibit, for example. It officially opened in June and already we've made some additions to it."

One such addition is an original Molly Brown Titanic rescue medal, given to crewmembers of Carpathia, the Cunard liner that rescued Titanic victims from lifeboats. This rare artifact is a temporary element to the exhibit, on loan to the museum until December by Robert Vaughan of Fredericton. Mr. Vaughan is the grandson of Robert H. Vaughan, a Carpathia crewman who was 17 years old at the time of the Titanic tragedy.

"The medal is a vivid reminder of Carpathia's midnight dash at full speed through ice-choked water, and the huge task of caring for more than 700 survivors on a very small ship," said Dan Conlin, the museum's curator of marine history. "We're very grateful that the Vaughan family has helped us tell this story."

The Molly Brown Titanic rescue medal was presented to Carpathia's crew by the outspoken and colourful survivor Molly Brown, a Denver millionairess who organized the women in Boat 6 to take control of the oars. Carpathia's swift and well-organized rescue of Titanic's 705 survivors from lifeboats won acclaim from many quarters.

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Contact: Angela Campbell
Maritime Museum of the Atlantic
902-424-6446
E-mail: campbeam@gov.ns.ca

ngr Oct. 28, 1998 10:18 a.m.

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